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ABSTRACT

Since traditional epistemology has not been able to present a generality but rather has represented a male perspective as if it is general, neutral, and inclusive of women, then there is the possibility of offering a feminist epistemology. Thus, the critique of the tradition has to come first, to create a space where feminists can begin to actually do constructive and reconstructive work in epistemology. That work is just beginning to emerge, and this paper's goal is to contribute to that effort. The plan is to consider epistemology specifically in terms of its traditional meaning and the androcentric basis embedded in that meaning. The paper presents the feminist criticism of traditional epistemology and suggested corrections. It discusses Lorraine Code's concerns for a responsibilist epistemology, and Sandra Harding's feminist standpoint epistemology. It considers the advice of Charlotte Haddock Seigfried who concludes there can be no feminist epistemology and advises feminists to "abandon the misguided epistemological project we've inherited, rather than continue tinkering with it." The paper concludes by recommending co-opting epistemology and removing its absolute status, even in its non-vulgar form, in exchange for a qualified relativist status. It reclaims the value and importance of being able to make judgments and presents arguments based on criteria that are socially constructed and therefore open to criticism and improvement. It keeps in check epistemology's will to transcendental power and its desire to embrace dualisms such as knower/known, mind/body, theory/practice, subject/object. (Contains 9 notes and 35 references.) (BT)

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What Does (e)pistemology Have to Offer Feminists?

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What does (e)pistemology have to offer feminists?[1]

In *Feminist Epistemologies*, Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (1993) note in their introductory essay that feminists began contributing to Philosophy from the margins, and they have moved to the center.[2] The margins are the applied fields, in particular applied ethics, which is where feminist work was first published. "Feminist philosophers began work in the applied areas because feminism is, first and last, a political movement concerned with practical issues, and feminist philosophers understood their intellectual work to be a contribution to the public debate on crucial practical issues" (such as the right to equal job opportunities, and to own property) (p. 2). The center, or what Alcoff and Potter call "the 'core' areas" of philosophy are Epistemology and Metaphysics.

Alcoff and Potter (1993) inform us that when feminists began working in the field of Epistemology, their contribution was as critique of the tradition, as was their contribution in the other philosophical fields of study. If Epistemology is defined as a theory of knowledge in general, then a feminist epistemology which refers to women's experiences, is an oxymoron, due to its efforts to focus on the particularity of women instead of the generality of human beings. And, indeed, when feminists began contributing to Epistemology they were criticized for not doing Epistemology, as it has been historically defined. Feminists found that they can only begin to contribute to Epistemology by first challenging the Philosophical premise "that a general account of knowledge, one that uncovers justificatory standards a priori, is *possible*" (p. 1, emphasis in original). Feminists argue that while 'human beings' is a concept that claims to include "all people," it really has historically been an androcentric concept that represents a male perspective. Since traditional Epistemology has <u>not</u> been able to present a generality but rather has represented a male perspective as if it is general, neutral, and inclusive of women, then there is the possibility of offering a

feminist epistemology. This is why critique of the tradition has to come first, in order to create a space where feminists can begin to actually do constructive and reconstructive work in (e)pistemology. That work is just beginning to emerge now, and this paper is meant as a contribution to that effort.

My plan is to consider Epistemology more specifically, in terms of its traditional meaning, and the androcentric basis embedded in that meaning. I will then present the feminist criticism of traditional Epistemology and suggested corrections. I will discuss Lorraine Code's concern for a "responsibilist" epistemology, and Sandra Hardings' feminist standpoint epistemology. Charlene Haddock Seigfried (1997) concludes that there can be no feminist epistemology and she advises feminists to "abandon the misguided epistemological project we've inherited, rather than to continue tinkering with it." I will consider her advise and end by recommending co-opting "epistemology" and removing its absolute status, even in its non-vulgar form, in exchange for a qualified relativist status. I will reclaim the value and importance of being able to make judgments and present our arguments based on criteria that are socially constructed and therefore open to criticism and improvement. I will keep in check (e)pistemology's will to transcendental power and its desire to embrace dualisms such as knower/known, mind/body, theory/practice, subject/object. Thus, I will defend why I continue to use the word *epistemology*, though in its altered form of (e)pistemology.

Traditional Philosophy and Epistemology

Historically, Philosophy has been perceived as the "foundational" discipline which "grounds" knowledge claims. Philosophy has been defined as knowledge that is general and removed from everyday living and ordinary life. The task of the philosopher is one of trying to differentiate between valid and invalid assertions about the world, in a general sense. Earlier on, Philosophy struggled against religion for status as the foundational source of knowledge, and succeeded in defeating religion by relegating religion to *faith* and claiming

justified true belief for Philosophy. More recently Philosophy has been at risk of losing its foundational status, as science has gained in status. Thus we find more recent philosophers such as Russell, Husserl, Peirce, and Dewey concerned with keeping Philosophy "rigorous" and making it "more scientific." Even more recently, Philosophy's foundational status has been under attack by postmodernists who have declared Philosophy irrelevant and dead (Lyotard). Philosophers are being replaced by scientists (Quine), leaving poets, novelists, and storytellers (Rorty, Foucault, Derrida) as our moral teachers.

Philosophers historically defined Epistemology as the branch of Philosophy that develops theories concerning what counts as knowledge. Epistemologists look at questions about the *justification* of people's beliefs and concern themselves with the normative status of knowledge claims. Epistemologists attempt to *verify* claims that are made, and to prove the *validity* of arguments. Traditionally, epistemologists do not concern themselves with how people come to believe certain things or how they learn, saving those questions for sociology, psychology, and education. Epistemologists are concerned with what *warrants* the knowledge claims we make, therefore they ask normative questions such as what counts as good evidence, not causal questions concerning how beliefs are developed.

Epistemologists concern themselves with finding Knowledge, and they have historically defined absolute Truth as a necessary condition for Knowledge. Only that which is absolutely True is Knowledge; if we are not sure that something is True, we must call that something a *belief* instead of *knowledge*. Beliefs are not necessarily true, but Knowledge is necessarily True. There are different categories of beliefs, which depend on how close the beliefs are to being declared Knowledge, which is *True belief*. *Mere beliefs*, or right opinions, are stated as "S believes that p," with "S" symbolizing the subject of the belief, and "p" signifying the object of the belief. *Rational beliefs* are beliefs that are supported by compelling reasons ("S has good reason to believe that p"). We only call "p" Knowledge if

what S believes about p, and S has compelling reasons to believe about p, is really True ("S knows that p").

There are many kinds of Epistemological theories which have developed throughout time. Plato's theory is that we know 'that p' because our souls are immortal and therefore know all knowledge. Knowing is an act of remembering what our souls already know. Aristotle argues, in disagreement with his teacher, that it is not enough to recollect Truth, thus relying on thought as reality and the origin of knowledge. Aristotle suggests that we must test out our ideas with our experiences to be sure they are true, thus asserting that material things are the reality, and the origin of knowledge. If our ideas correspond to our experiences then we can conclude they are True. Aristotle's correspondence theory follows a path that leads us to present day science and the scientific method. Following a similar vein as Plato, Descartes argues that what we know is what is beyond doubt. By using Descartes' doubting method to dismiss everything we can doubt, until we come to what we take to be self-evident, we can find Truth. Peirce follows Aristotle's path into the future, arguing that we will not know Truth until the end of time. Truth is something that we are getting closer to as we continue to test out our ideas with our experiences, but none of us can be guaranteed of certain knowledge in our own lifetimes. Thus, we find today that while epistemologists still strive for clarity and coherence, most have rejected certainty as a condition of knowledge, following Peirce's lead.

Foundational epistemologists seek to establish that we can ultimately justify our claims by relying on "foundational" beliefs which are justified, but not in terms of other beliefs. Coherentists seek to establish that claims fit coherently into the existing body of knowledge. Some describe foundationalists as embracing a pyramid model, and coherentists as embracing a raft model. The pyramid model attempts to establish basic "foundational" beliefs (undisputed Truths) and builds upon these. The raft model allows that specific truths may change over time, as we change in our understanding, so that individual

logs on the raft may need repair or replacement, yet the raft continues to hold us and support us down the river of Truth.

There are some key metaphysical assumptions embedded in traditional Philosophy's definition of Epistemology, no matter which particular theory one embraces. These assumptions are based on several dualisms, which we have already come across in my above description. We find that Philosophy distinguishes itself from science, for example, based on the separation of theory from practice, and universality from particularity. Epistemology talks about knowers and the known (subjects/objects, S and p), and separates itself from science and religion by drawing a sharp distinction between relative (individual) belief and absolute (universal) Truth.

Let's look more closely at the affects of these assumptions, from a feminist perspective.

Some Feminist Concerns

Feminists must begin their discussion of Epistemology by questioning its assumption of generalizability. They must make the case that their voices have not been historically included in the general concept of knowers, but rather an androcentric (male) perspective has been presented.[3] Many feminists have contributed to the argument that *girl/woman* is excluded from the concept "human beings" ("mankind") and treated as "other" in Euro-western philosophy.[4] A significant example of androcentrism in Philosophy is demonstrated by the association of Philosophy with the mind, which is linked to males, in contrast to the body, which is connected to females. Although Descartes usually gets blamed for splitting the mind from the body in Euro-western philosophy (Bordo, 1987; Rorty, 1979), I argue that we can go back to ancient Greece and find many examples of Plato severing the mind from the body, and assigning the body to a lesser status (author, 2000). A most vivid example of Plato's separation and assigned value can be found in his theory of knowledge. Plato describes each of us as having an immortal soul that knows all, and we forget what we know when our souls inhabit our bodies at birth. Thus, our bodies

cause us to forget all knowledge, and we are doomed to spending our lifetimes trying to remember what we already knew.

Once the body is split from the mind, and given a lesser status as that which serves as a barrier, deceives us, and lures us away from seeking Truth due to its earthly passions, then it is an easy next step to associate women with the body. Simone de Beauvoir (1952/1989) carefully makes the argument that there are only two things that distinguish women from men when we look at cultures around the world and through-out time, and yet these two things have been used to assign women an inferior, Other, status in many cultures. Given the inferior status of the body, it is not surprising to find that these two things that distinguish women from men have to do with women's physical bodies, that they have weaker muscles and they menstruate. de Beauvoir points toward the future when technology will help women compensate for their weaker muscles, and birth control will bring their reproductive systems within their control. When that day comes, de Beauvoir predicts that women may finally be given an equal status. The day that de Beauvoir predicted is here for many women, still women have not yet reached an equal status. Neutralizing bodily differences is not enough to change women's status, the status of the body must be raised and reconnected to the mind. Feminists realize now that in order to help put an end to the androcentrism in Philosophy, we must call into question the body/mind split, and make the case for a wholistic *bodymind*. That argument comes from many diverse camps.

Once establishing that the female voice has been excluded from Philosophy in general, which I think many philosophers would agree has been successfully accomplished, the next step is to establish the exclusion of the female voice within the field of Epistemology. Traditional Epistemology shows its androcentricism with its embrace of Rationality as an Ideal, for rationality (or reason) is again associated with the mind, which is linked to males. Irrationality, in contrast, is associated with the emotions and intuitions, which are normally attributed to women. So, historically within the field of Epistemology, males

function as the model for rationality and females serve as the model for irrationality. Feminists have argued for the value of intuition and emotions (and imagination) in reason, by turning to womens' experiences and describing womens' ways of knowing (Belenky et al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Martin, 1994; Ruddick, 1989). Along with traditional androcentric Epistemological models, we now have examples of gynocentric (female) Epistemological models (Duran, 1991). However, claiming a distinctive status for women as knowers not only serves to raise their status, it also continues to maintain a gender split. As long as a gender split is maintained, women still serve in the role of Other defined in contrast to rational males. Once again, feminists have learned that the best way to gain women's status as rational beings who are potential knowers is to call into question the rational/irrational (mind/body) split, and to show that all of us use many tools to help us construct knowledge, our reason, emotions, intuition, and imagination, for example (Thayer-Bacon, 2000).

Another good place to look for androcentrism in Epistemology is with the "subject," 'S' in "S knows that p" statements. The subject, the knower, the epistemic agent, are all quite objective, neutral terms that could represent anyone, so it seems. In fact, not only is the knower represented with neutral terminology, the importance and weight of considering 'S's' contribution to 'that p' is minimized, thus devaluing the importance of 'S' even more. Historically, Epistemology has been based on an assumption that subjects (S) do not need to be taken into consideration in determining 'that p.' As Epistemology has historically developed, the subject, S, has been severed from 'that p' and the attention of epistemologists has been focused on 'that p,' at the expense of 'S.' Euro-western Philosophy concerns itself with the product of knowers' efforts. Knowers are separated from what is known, and devalued in importance. Lorraine Code (1987) argues that not taking subjects into account leads us to the following traditional Epistemological conclusions:

> (1) that knowledge properly so-called is autonomous in that it is of no epistemological significance whose it is; (2) that knowledge acquisition may be of psychological interest but it is irrelevant to an epistemologist's quest for criteria of justification, validity, and verification; and (3) that knowledge is objective in the sense that discussion of the character and epistemic circumstances of subjects has nothing to contribute to the proper epistemological task of assessing the product (p 25-26).

If we can ignore knowers in our quest for knowledge, then we can ignore questions such as how do we come to be knowledgable, and for what purpose is such knowledge? We can ignore questions that draw our attention to the context of knowing, show the connection of knowledge with values, and point to issues of power. We can ignore gender, class, ethnicity, and race as categories of concern, for example. If we diminish the importance of subjects, then we can pretend to offer a neutral, general theory of knowledge, when what we really offer is an androcentric, property owning, White Epistemology. The biases of Epistemology are visible in the objectification and neutralization of the subject.

Code's work has contributed to a feminist effort to bring the subject, 'S,' more directly into discussions of epistemology. In *Epistemic Responsibility* (1987) her focus is on making the case that there are moral implications to knowledge claims, and that we need to understand how directly connected morality is to epistemology. Code's central claim is "that knowing well is as much a moral as it is an epistemological matter" (p. 252). The way we understand that knowing well is a matter of considerable moral significance is to pay attention to the character of would-be knowers. Code tells us she is trying to shift the emphasis of investigation and evaluation so that knowers come to bear as much of the onus of credibility as "the known" (p. 8-9). She wants to put "epistemic responsibility" in a central place in theories of knowledge. She wants to insist that knowers must be held accountable to their community as well as to the evidence.

In "Taking Subjectivity into Account," published in *Feminist Epistemologies*, Code (1993) again takes up the topic of looking at 'S' of 'S knows that p' statements. Here she makes the case these statements are representative of a "received" knowledge model that is very narrow and limited in scoop. By "received" knowledge, she means "conditions that hold for any knower, regardless of her or his identity, interests, and circumstances (i.e., her or his subjectivity)" (p. 15). This dominant Enlightenment Epistemological theory relies on Ideals of objectivity and value neutrality, to argue that Reason allows 'S' to transcend particularity and contingency. Thus 'S' is suppose to represent anyone and everyone (no one in particular).[5] Code wants to seriously entertain a model of "constructed" knowledge that "requires epistemologists to pay as much attention to the nature and situation--the location--of *S* as they commonly pay to the content of *p*; (she maintains) that a constructivist reorientation requires epistemologists to take subjective factors--factors that pertain to the circumstances of the subject, *S*--centrally into account in evaluative and justificatory procedures" (p. 20).[6] Thus, gender, race, class, ethnicity become recognized as primary analytic categories as we move to take subjectivity into account.

Code (1993) makes the case that subjectivity is always there, hidden, despite disclaimers, and that we can always find the context that is being suppressed. Subjectivity is found in the examples selected for discussion, and the experiences used to represent "human thought," for example. Contra to traditional Epistemologists, Code argues that "taking subjectivity into account does not *entail* abandoning objectivity" (p. 36). What it does is help us guard against reductivism and rigidity. It allows us to accommodate change, by letting knowledge claims be provisional and approximate. Code describes herself as a "mitigated relativist," who argues that epistemology has no ultimate foundation, "but neither does it float free, because it is grounded in experiences and practices, in the efficacy of dialogic negotiation and of action" (p. 39). This is similar to my *qualified relativist* position which I further develop in another article (in press).

What we have found out so far is that feminists have successfully made the case for Philosophy's androcentrism, as well as Epistemology's androcentrism. Feminists have argued soundly for the dissolving of the body/mind dualism and for taking subjectivity into account as they make the case for viewing knowledge in relation to knowers. Current male philosophers are careful not to claim a spectator's view of knowledge, and are willing to acknowledge their own embeddedness. Yet many do not want to relinquish the claim to epistemic privilege that they have held for so long, for fear they will be left with nothing (strong relativism). In their efforts to hold back subjectivity and contextuality so that they admit some, but not so much that all is lost, some traditional Epistemologists such as Harvey Siegel (1997) have found allies amongst feminists, in particular spontaneous empiricist feminists and standpoint feminists, as labeled by Sandra Harding (1991, 1993). I turn to their work now.

Feminist Epistemologies

According to Harding (1993), spontaneous empiricist feminists, such as Lynn Hankinson Nelson, Elizabeth Potter, and Helen Longino,[7] argue that insufficient care and rigor in following the existing methods and norms is what has caused sexist and androcentric results in research. They do not think the problem lies in the basic canons, but rather with how we *do* science and philosophy. They recommend that what we need is more precision and clarity, what we need is to do *good* science and philosophy that is more careful and rigorous. Empiricist feminists accept the inescapablity of social influence on the content of science. Longino's (1990, 1993) work helps us understand the deep hostility science and philosophy have historically expressed toward women. Potter (1993) and Nelson (1990,1993) shed light on the negotiating process that goes on in science, within epistemological communities.

Nelson, Potter, and Longino each argue for a community's approach for establishing warrantability, as a way to undermine Epistemology's traditional transcendental perspective,

as well as to avoid not being able to offer critique at all. Rather than thinking individuals are epistemic agents, that 'S' is a single knower, they recommend we think of communities as the primary epistemic agencies. Code (1987, 1993) recommends this as well. This strategy to combat science and philosophy's hostility, Longino (1993) describes as "multiplying the subjects," or as "views from many wheres" (p. 113). If we treat science (and philosophy) as a practice, that commits us to viewing inquiry as ongoing and theories as partial, then "we can recognize pluralism in the community as one of the conditions for the continued development of scientific knowledge in this sense" (p. 116). Longino concludes no segment of the community can claim epistemic privilege (p. 118). She recommends the creation of what she calls a "cognitive democracy," of "democratic science," using public and common standards.

Harding (1993), however, thinks "the methods and norms in the disciplines are too weak to permit researchers *systematically* to identify and eliminate from the results of research those social values, interests, and agendas that are shared by the entire scientific community or virtually all of it" (p. 52). The scientific method cannot rid itself of bias. Thus she recommends her strong objectivity method, which places the subjects of knowledge on the same critical, causal plane as objects of knowledge (p. 69). Harding's "strong objectivity" requires that scientists (and philosophers) and their communities (Subjects) be critiqued as well as 'that p.'

> All of the kinds of objectivity-maximizing procedures focused on the nature and/or social relations that are the direct result of observation and reflection must also be focused on the observers and reflectors--scientists and the larger society whose assumptions they share. But a maximally critical study of scientists (philosophers) and their communities can be done only from the perspective of those whose lives have been marginalized by such communities (p. 69).

Harding's strong objectivity method is based on a feminist standpoint theory. Harding and others[8] have made important points about who gets left out of communities of inquirers. They argue for the need to expand epistemological communities to include those on the margins, those outsiders who are not traditionally viewed as experts, such as women, people of color, and people lacking in property. Using Marx, Engels, and Lukacs (and Hegel) as their sources initially, feminist standpoint theorists seek to understand the relations between power and knowledge, by looking at collective subjects, groups with shared histories and shared locations in relation to power. They try to generate different accounts from the dominant ones and explore the intersections of different outsider perspectives (e.g. feminists of color, gay and lesbian accounts, etc.). They do not claim to have a traditional Epistemological goal of seeking Truth, rather their project is to understand power relations, in order to be able to change them, by privileging the speech of marginalized subjects. Their Subject focus is also not of individuals, but collective subjects, groups who share histories, experiences, based on their shared positionality in relations of power.

Feminist standpoint theorists adopt the traditional Epistemologist's claim to epistemic privilege by claiming epistemic privilege for those traditionally excluded from mainstream philosophy. According to Harding (1993), their claim is "that all knowledge attempts are socially situated, and that some of these objective social locations are better than others as starting points for knowlege projects (to) challenge some of the most fundamental assumptions of the scientific (and Philosophical) world view..." (p. 56). Looking from the margins helps us see the dominant culture and its assumptions of superiority. Marginalized lives provide us with the problems and agendas for standpoint theories, but not the solutions. Feminist standpoint theory starts from womens' lives, but these women are embodied and visible, and they are multiple and heterogenous, contradictary or incoherent.

These marginal views are not just from our own marginalized lives, as women, but from other, different, and often oppositional womens' lives as well (p. 58).

Harding (1993) describes standpoint theorists as "sociological relativists"--but not epistemological relativists (p. 61). Standpoint epistemologists want to have it both ways, they accept "the idea of real knowledge that is socially situated" (p. 50). While Harding does not want to claim she has a God's eye view from nowhere of what is Right/True, she does want to claim the possibility of epistemic privilege, just with different subjects. She shifts the claim of critical leverage from the center to the margin, from philosophers and scientists, to those excluded from philosophy and science's androcentric theories. By doing so, she continues to use an absolutist tool (epistemic privilege) to try to dismantle absolutist Epistemology, in effect using a master's tool to try to dismantle the master's house (Bar On, 1993).[9] Another absolutist tool Harding insists on maintaining is "objectivity," even though she is well aware of how objectivity has been used in scientific projects that are now judged to be sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, etc. Harding argues "(t)he notion of objectivity is useful in providing a way to think about the gap that should exist between how any individual of group wants the world to be and how it is in fact" (p. 72). Thus we find she reveals her realist leanings. Longino (1993) describes Harding's standpoint theory as using the strategy of "changing the subject" to combat science and philosophy's hostility to girls/women, and she suggests Harding's standpoint theory begs the question.

Harding (1993) tries to deny that her project is an epistemological one, arguing instead that she is looking at political and social concerns. However, this sharp separation between epistemology and social and political theory undermines her own claim that "the grounds for knowledge are fully saturated with history and social life rather than abstracted from it" (p. 57). What Harding needs to deny is that her project is a transcendental Epistemological one. She needs to question the assumption of transcendence that is embedded within traditional Epistemology as historically defined, rather than giving up on the idea that her project is concerned with what counts as criteria and standards and critiquing

reasons used to justify arguments. She, and other feminists, makes significant contributions to the collapse of absolutist Epistemology by highlighting the relationship between knowledge and power. By showing transcendental Epistemology's biases and limitations, Harding contributes to the description of a transformed (e)pistemology on socially constructed grounds. If Harding's theory is an accurate description of knowing, then she cannot avoid using (e)pistemological theory in her own project. What she can do is avoid transcendental Epistemology, and the use of its tools (such as epistemic privilege and objectivity).

I agree with empiricist feminists and standpoint feminists that there is a need to embrace pluralism, and in fact I argue elsewhere that (e)pistemological fallibilism entails (e)pistemological pluralism, contra to Peirce and Siegel (Chapter 2, in press). However, I do not think any of us, as knowers, can escape our own social embeddedness completely, and therefore I do not think any one standpoint has the chance of offering us a privileged, clearer, sounder view. There are as strong of limitations on women's ways of knowing, as on men's, on Black's as on White's, on lower-classes' as on middle or upper-classes', on homosexual's as on heterosexual's ways of knowing, just to name a few categories. The argument for standpoint epistemology risks sliding into determinism on one end of the spectrum and reaffirming a spectator's view on the other end. I argue that where we fall is somewhere in-between.

We are greatly determined by our social setting, as social beings, but we are also able to become aware of our embeddedness, because we are social beings. Others shape our views but others also help us become aware of how views differ. I do not want to argue that any of us has a privileged perspective, I do not think any of us has a spectator's view on Reality, we are always embedded within it. We do not have views from nowhere, and we are also never able to see the world from everywhere. We are always situated and limited, our views are from *somewhere*. We are able to gain more critical leverage the more we experience and expose ourselves to others' standpoints, but

we are never able to gain complete understanding. Contra to Peirce (1958), I do not think the process of gaining understanding is linear, and the last person on earth will know Truth, at the end of time. The last people on earth will still be struggling with trying to understand from within their limited standpoints and they will still need each other to help them inquire and develop greater insight.

Avoiding transcendental Epistemology

Some feminists argue that feminists should give up the task of trying to write a feminist epistemology, given the way Epistemology has historically been framed, in terms of its assumptions of generic transcendence (Code, Seigfried). Others argue there is value in developing a gynocentric epistemology in contrast to the androcentric ones we have inherited (Duran). I agree with Code and Seigfried that it is impossible to write a feminist epistemology given the constrictions of Epistemology as historically defined. A feminist epistemology must include a gendered subject. Any attempt to include gender will be judged by traditional Enlightenment epistemologists as over-reaching the boundaries of Epistemology and asking Epistemology to stretch beyond its healthy limits, as we find with Siegel (1997).

Seigfried (1997) argues that there is a current hegemony of Epistemology in philosophical and theoretical discourse, and this hegemony is due to the model of rationality many feminists are trying to challenge. Seigfried turns to pragmatism to help make the case that rationality includes "at least four dimensions, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and practical," whereas our current model of rationality focuses only on the intellectual dimension (James, 1909/1977, p. 55). Like Dewey and James, Seigfried rejects "the myriad dualisms informing centuries of philosophical speculation and the spectator theory of knowledge that emerged from them" (p. 2). She describes the need to replace "traditional models of knowing as rationally speculative or empirically passive, as abstracting essences, satisfying *a priori* criteria, and producing certainty" with a model of knowing as a way of doing (p. 3).

She warns that when feminists attempt to "add back the other dimensions" to the intellectually focused rationality model they are vulnerable to the charge of undermining the model itself. What feminists need to do is transform the model of rationality, and thus the traditional models of Epistemology.

Following Dewey's lead ("The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 1960), Seigfried (1997) rejects what she calls "the very problem which forms the core of epistemology," that experience attaches to a private subject, and develops independently of the world of facts, thus creating "the problem of how the mind or subjective consciousness can understand the external world" (p. 3). For her, this separation of the knower from the world of facts (the known) is based on a false metaphysics that separates experience from existence. This false assumption is the basis for the spectator view of knowers. Seigfried also rejects Epistemology's conceived problem of knowledge *in general*. The Epistemological problem of knowledge *in general* is derived from assuming that there is a knower in general, who is outside of the world to be known. Seigfried warns that unless this assumption is undermined, feminist contributions to epistemology "will never be taken as anything other than at best a distraction from and, at worst a distortion of, the epistemological enterprise" (p. 4). She charges Epistemologists with continuing "to tinker at perfecting a perfectly rational account of knowledge in itself, while ignoring the question of what such knowledge is for, as well as how it arises in experience" (p. 5).

Seigfried (1997) encourages feminists to reject the Epistemological turn that has dominated twentieth century philosophy departments, as pragmatists did earlier. She encourages feminists to embrace a pragmatic theory of knowledge as inquiry that satisfactorily resolves problematic situations. Seigfried recommends that "(f)eminists do not have to defend themselves against hostile charges that they are not doing rigorous philosophy, that is, epistemology. They are not doing sloppy epistemology, but have understood that theories of knowledge must continue to develop into theories and practices

of inquiry in order to get out of the cul-de-sac in which epistemology has been stuck ever since it went into business for its own sake" (p. 14).

I agree with feminist efforts to reject Epistemology, given the current philosophical definition of Epistemology. However, I do not think feminists should be willing to accept this current definition, we need to redefine "epistemology." I recommend redefining "epistemology" because I think traditional Epistemologists are right, that it is not possible to hold a position seriously and yet deny the need to ground a position with reasons which justify holding it. It is impossible to avoid epistemological concerns, such as what counts as criteria and standards for judging and critiquing reasons used to justify arguments, without risking sliding into dogmatism. And, it is vital that feminists actively engage in epistemological concerns in order to insist that criteria and standards remain open to critique. If we do not address (e)pistemological concerns, how can we make them visible and hold them accountable for the tremendous power they hold over peoples' lives? Feminists need to actively participate in efforts to continually improve upon the criteria and standards that our communities use. We need to confront (e)pistemological concerns, not avoid them because of the transcendental baggage attached to them. We can only confront absolutist Epistemology with some tools of our own, such as a feminist (e)pistemological theory offers. Thus, I do not want to walk away from (e)pistemology, as a field of study, I want to redescribe (e)pistemology in a way that does not assume transcendence. While Epistemology has been declared dead in its transcendental forms, it still continues to show its ugly transcendental shapes and falsely judge many as lacking in knowledge, and as inferior. Epistemology still continues to hold powerful sway in determining who is heard and who is silenced, who gets hired and promoted and who is fired or impeached.

My project is one of redefining Epistemology in a naturalized manner that reclaims the traditional Epistemological concerns of standards and criteria for warranting arguments and determining truths from falsities. These concerns must be reclaimed in order to make them visible and hold them accountable as well as make them pragmatically useful, but on

socially constructed grounds, not on transcendental grounds. Dismissing Epistemology as a topic allows it to become/ remain invisible and continue to gain in power, or at least not lessen or be removed from power. Epistemology is allowed to remain the given, the norm, against which everything else is measured. It is like not discussing race or gender, for the fear is if we continue to discuss race and gender, we continue to recreate a racist, sexist world. Ideally, many of us hope to live in a world where race and gender become meaningless categories. Yet, that is not the world in which any of us have grown up, it is not the world in which we have all been acculturated, the world that has been socially constructed for us by our elders. Given the contextuality of a racist, sexist world, if we ignore that contextuality we do not remove it, we allow it (Whiteness, Maleness) to remain the hidden ruler, the assumed standard by which everything else is measured. Ignoring essentializing categories does not make them go away, it is the effort to confront them and deconstruct them that dissolves them.

If we just embrace a new concept, such as Dewey's *inquiry*, for (e)pistemology, my fear is that we will easily make the mistake of another attempt at transcendence. We replace one form of transcendence for another, just as Truth has been represented as The Forms, God, Reason, Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth. Given the philosophical contextuality of having inherited a world of Epistemological transcendence, I worry that if we ignore Epistemology it will be allowed to remain the invisible standard by which all others theories concerning ways of knowing are measured. We must confront Epistemology, and deconstruct it, so that we can dissolve the dualisms it creates and move on. These dualisms include for example: absolute/relative, subjective/objective, mind/body, knower/known. So, as much as I would like to ignore it and not use the term *epistemology* at all, I think doing so will not solve our problems. Hopefully, it will not recreate them as well, which is why I choose to symbolize a redescribed epistemology as "(e)pistemology." We cannot let go of the term *epistemology*, we must coopt it.

My project is one of analysis and critique, as well as redescription. What I offer is one pragmatist social feminist view, a relational perspective of knowing. In *Relational "(e)pistemologies,"* I seek to offer a feminist (e)pistemological theory that insists that knowers/subjects are fallible, that our criteria are corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that our standards are socially constructed, and thus continually in need of critique and reconstruction. I offer a self-conscious and reflective (e)pistemological theory, one that attempts to be adjustable and adaptable as people gain further in understanding. This (e)pistemology must be inclusive and open to others, because of its assumption of fallible knowers. And this (e)pistemology must be capable of being corrected because of its assumption that our criteria and standards are of this world, one's we, as fallible knowers socially construct.

Conclusion

The canons of Epistemology cannot stand up to the criticisms they are receiving from feminists (pragmatists and postmodernists). The current absolutist definition of Epistemology (even in Siegel's non-vulgar form, 1997) has problems with it which affect all philosophers, not just women, for all philosophers live in a gendered society. Not allowing Epistemology to address gender issues affects men and women alike. Epistemology must be redefined so that Subjects are able to be recognized as gendered subjects who are also social beings living in-relation-with others. Epistemology must be redefined so that it can be sensitive to actual outcomes, and require awareness of diverse contexts. A redefined (e)pistemology must include: "the emotional dimensions of understanding, the mutuality of facts and values, the exploration and rejection of pervasive prejudices, recognition of multiple standpoints, cooperative problem-solving, and valuing the other in their distinctiveness" (Seigfried, 1997, p. 9).

Traditional Epistemologists will respond to my suggestion with a fear of the strong contextuality it introduces to theories of knowledge, as Siegel responds to this suggestion

(1997). But we have learned from Code that any efforts to limit or remove context are doomed to eventual failure. As long as Epistemologists continue to be willing to recognize we need knowers in order to have knowledge, then knowers will bring with them their contextuality, including their gender.

Endnotes:

1. This paper comes from the Introduction and Chapter One of my *Relational "(e)pistemologies,"* which is in press. The work for this project of redescribing (e)pistemology in a non-transcendent manner is supported by a Spencer Foundation small grant as well as a faculty development leave from Bowling Green State University. I am very grateful to both institutions for the gift of time to think this argument through.
2. I follow Rorty's (1979) lead and capitalize Philosophy and Epistemology in their transcendent forms and bracket them, as (e)pistemology, in their non-transcendent forms.
3. I follow Belenky et al's lead, from *Womens Ways of Knowing* (1986), in using the term *voice* to describe a person's worldview. 'Voice' is meant to include all that contextually makes up who we are, so it is more than one's spirit, or mind, or soul, it is the bodymind as one, within the context of our own unique experiences. I agree with Belenky et al that 'voice' helps shift us away from ocular images, is more direct and overtly physical, and is more supportive of a social (e)pistemological theory which seeks to emphasize the importance of community and conversation.
4. I refer the reader to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, as well as more recent work contributing to the analysis of the androcentric voice (the 1960's): Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*; (the 1970's): Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*; (the 1980's): Belenky et al's *Womens Ways of Knowing*, Susan Bordo's *Flight to Objectivity*, Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, Jean Grimshaw's *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking*, Sandra Harding's *The Science Question*, Evelyn Fox Keller's *Reflections on*

Gender and Science, and Sarah Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking*. There are even more contributions in this past decade, for this work continues to the present.

5. Feminists coined the phrase "view from nowhere/view from everywhere" to represent the absolutism/relativism debate. Code credits Haraway with this phrasing ("Situated Knowledges," Fall 1988), others credit Bordo (1987), but the terminology can be traced back to the title of Thomas Nagel's (1986). *A View From Nowhere*.

6. More recently Code has described her epistemological view as an ecological one in a paper she gave at the International Association of Women Philosophers in Boston, MA, August, 1998, titled "Ecological Thinking, Responsible Knowing."

7. All of these authors have essays in Alcoff and Potter's (1993). *Feminist Epistemologies*.

8. Other standpoint theorists include: Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins, and Dorothy E. Smith. A more recent discussion of feminist standpoint theory was published in the Winter 1997 edition of *Signs*. Hartsock, Collins, Smith, and Harding all respond to an essay by Susan Hekman. My discussion of Harding's work stems from Chapter 5 of *Transforming Critical Thinking*.

9. This phrase is originally Audre Lorde's, from a speech she gave titled "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" which can be found published in (1981, 1983) *This Bridge Called my Back*.

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